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REPORT ON FIRST LEADERSHIP TEAMWORK DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY FOR WASHINGTON, D.C. (WARRENTON, OCTOBER 28-30, 1965). APPLICATIONS OF HUMAN RELATIONS LABORATORY TRAINING, NUMBER 1, 1966.

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A 3-DAY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM OF LABORATORY TRAINING FOCUSED ON INDIVIDUAL SENSITIVITY, SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS, AND DIAGNOSTIC PROBLEM SOLVING. THE PROGRAM WAS PLANNED TO FACILITATE BETTER INTERAGENCY TEAMWORK IN DEALING WITH THE URBAN PROBLEMS OF WASHINGTON, D.C., WHICH ARE COMPLICATED BY THE PROSPECT OF HOME RULE WITH INADEQUATE LEADERSHIP PREPARATION. THE RESPONSE OF 60 COMMUNITY LEADERS TO THE PROGRAM PROPOSAL INDICATED A STRONGLY FELT NEED FOR THIS TRAINING. EIGHTEEN LEADERS PARTICIPATED. LECTURES, T-GROUPS, OBSERVATION, AND FEEDBACK ON EACH GROUP BY THE OTHER, EXERCISES IN SPECIFIC SKILLS, AND FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS COMPRISED THE PROGRAM. PARTICIPANT EVALUATION SHOWED GENERAL SATISFACTION. AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OPENNESS AND TRUST WAS SEEN AS THE MOST EFFECTIVELY ACCOMPLISHED OBJECTIVE. FURTHER PROJECTS WERE SUGGESTED AND PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS WERE LISTED. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM NATIONAL TRAINING LABORATORIES, 1201 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036. (JA)

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Applications of Human Relations Laboratory Training

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FIRST LEADERSHIP TEAMWORK DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
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REPORT

on

FIRST LEADERSHIP TEAMWORK DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY

for

WASHINGTON, D. C.

- - - -

October 28 - 30, 1965
Airlie House, Warrenton, Virginia

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Sponsored by

THE UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

In cooperation with

NATIONAL TRAINING LABORATORIES
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

by

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NATIONAL TRAINING LABORATORIES

January 28, 1966

FIRST LEADERSHIP TEAMWORK DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
for
WASHINGTON, D. C.

I. INTRODUCTION

The First Leadership Teamwork Development Laboratory for Washington demonstrated that key community leaders will step back from the tremendous pressures of day-to-day work and invest time in a deliberate effort to build better teamwork. The Laboratory held October 28-30 ran for a short time and involved a small number of persons, but it was a significant step in the process of devising training for cummunity leaders. It came about because there was strong enough conviction that better teamwork was needed and enough willingness to experiment with a new approach. Better teamwork was seen as a critical step toward collaborative problem solving in a complex urban setting marked by conflicting interests, rapidly changing needs and problems, and emerging programs, roles, and opportunities. The organizers and training staff for the laboratory agreed that building teamwork in such a setting required changing behavior and that providing information is not enough to achieve this. Training would have to reach the person with enough impact that he will experiment with new ways of behaving, of relating, and of managing conflict.

The Laboratory was conceived through a series of discussions with James Banks, director of the United Planning Organization, and the Washington members of the Advisory Committee for NTL's community leadership development program: W. C. Dutton, Sterling Tucker, and Curtis Mial* The plan began to take shape during discussions of Washington's problems -- problems of poverty, of interagency cooperation, of young people in trouble, of welfare, of relationships between federal and district offices.

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*Respectively, Planning Consultant then Director for National Capital Planning Commission, Director of Washington Urban League, NTL Associate Director.

One deep concern was what home rule would mean in terms of new leadership demands. (Washington could be somewhat in the position of a newly independent nation without having adequately prepared for new responsibilities.) Another concern was whether laboratory training offered any clues for helping the United Planning Organization to realize its potential for providing an increasingly effective impact on the major problems of Washington. (Could a training approach achieve interagency collaboration on problems requiring all the energy that could be mustered?)

The group saw themselves as a committee to find out whether Washington leaders would respond to a training program focused on individual behavior and on the small working group as the decision-making unit even in large urban communities. They saw some of the recent applications of laboratory training by the National Training Laboratories (in industry, in the State Department, in other government agencies, in the annual community leadership development programs at Bethel, Maine) as highly relevant to the human problems of leadership in Washington.

There was hesitancy, however, as to whether top influential professional and volunteer leaders would respond. Would people say problems were too pressing? That things were moving too fast to take time out for training? Would people be willing to undergo the intensely involving nature of laboratory training? Would they be willing to look at themselves and their own behavior as somehow involved in the problems that were delaying community action and cooperation? Thus one of the obstacles the planning group had to overcome was their own feelings of hesitancy. They themselves had to decide to take a risk in initiating a new approach to training without any guarantee of acceptance. The decision, however, was made to draft a proposal describing the program as fully as possible and to circulate it to 60 key persons identified as key leaders.

The response was electrifying. A key church leader indicated that this might be the most important activity that Washington community leadership could participate in at this time. Others indicated that the need was "almost desperate"; if anything could be done along the lines outlined in the proposal, it would be highly desirable. Others indicated a feeling of need, but hedged their comments by saying that time demands were so strong they wondered whether a significant number of people would give the time required. Only a few out of the total 60 indicated skepticism and an unwillingness to give the idea a try. The consensus was a strong endorsement of the general purposes of the training program and an expression of willingness to see whether it could succeed.

II. THE PROGRAM

The next steps were finding a time when an initial group of 20-25 might be brought together to test out laboratory training focused on individual sensitivity, the dynamics of the small group, and diagnostic problem solving. It was agreed that the United Planning Organization would issue the invitations as sponsors of the program. This meant that the program would be seen as a "legitimate" enterprise. Airlie House in Warrenton, Virginia, was selected as the residential facility providing privacy and "being away" from job, telephone, and family pressures. Eighteen participants appeared on the morning of October 28 (see appended List of Participants). One of these decided this was "not his cup of tea" and withdrew the second day. For the rest, there were changes in attitude by the closing session.

Although all had responded to the proposed training with a strong expression of need for training related to problems of teamwork, collaboration, interagency cooperation, they approached the actual experience with a high degree of skepticism and resistance. The training

staff of three (from the Graduate School of Business of the University of California at Los Angeles, the South Carolina State Department of Mental Health, and the Washington staff of NTL) provided the target for this resistance. To an unusual degree the staff had to work at the beginning against participant suspicion and fear of being manipulated. At the end of the program it was possible to discuss this frankly in terms of the laboratory itself and of whether this had implications for relationships in the community. One participant who had evidenced suspicion at the start ended by being highly positive in his evaluation, though admitting he still wondered whether a training exercise had been manipulated. Another initial skeptic wrote at the end about "the integrity of the process."

Another change of attitude was indicated by one action-oriented participant known in Washington for his direct-action methods. At the end he commented to one of the staff that he and others had been talking of bringing Saul Alinsky to Washington. He said that at the laboratory, with its focus on more authentic interpersonal communication, he had begun to see other alternatives that could be more useful than the conflict model of problem solving. Conflict was not seen as something to deny or to avoid but as something to manage. Openness was seen as one requirement if conflict is to be managed as a potentially constructive force rather than a "win-lose" situation. A third type of change indicated in the evaluation comments was that participants who had had close working relationships before now felt that they knew one another at a different and deeper level. Incidentally, the fact that some of the participants did have ongoing working relations created training issues since whatever happened in the training environment was in a sense "for keeps." This was not an academic exercise for strangers but an event that would be

remembered and referred to back on the job. The level of openess and trust that might emerge in the training situation would have implications for future work together.

Many of the comments at the end centered around dissatisfaction with usual ways of dealing with one another. This is not to overstate changes that took place in three short days but rather to suggest that alternatives to existing patterns were glimpsed. At the start these three days were looked on as a very long time to give to training. At the end almost everyone was saying, "We need more time." Even so, the group that had met with a high degree of suspicion of the training process--even though this was mixed with anticipation and hope that something worthwhile would occur--became a more closely knit group. They were talking about having to find new ways of relating where the old ways of fighting and cutthroat competition seemed inadequate.

III. LABORATORY TRAINING APPROACH

It may be useful to describe briefly what "laboratory training" is and then to review the design of this particular program. Laboratory training aims at behavioral change by involving the participant in experiences involving knowing, feeling, and doing. The laboratory provides information and theory about individuals, groups, organizations, but the basic content is found in the here-and-now behavior of participants. The essential task is to build a group whose members can set goals, define problems, develop trust, communicate, develop leadership, manage conflict, and perform in responsible and creative membership roles. Working on this task together while encountering one another's behavior and seeing one's own behavior as it looks to others makes the experience a powerful means to more effective ways of working together back on the job. A variety of activities are provided to clarify this experience and help participants

apply it to their community efforts where the same skills and sensitivities are needed. Experience and research suggest that new perceptions and behavioral capacities acquired through laboratory education can be translated into adaptive behavior changes in the participants' home organizations.

IV. DESIGN OF PROGRAM

The three-day program ran as follows:

Thursday, October 28

Morning activities:

Opening session -- overview of program.	This enabled staff and participants to check expectations, to explore potential learning from this experience, and to help participants adopt some roles that might help them benefit from experience (for example, participant-observer, experimenter, helper).
Lecture on perceptions.	This lecture and discussion explored possibilities of seeing the same things differently from different vantage points and the implications of this for joint planning and action.

Afternoon Activities:

Participants worked in two groups. Group A observed Group B begin task of forming a group that could help each other learn.	This slice of group development provided realistic experience in the observer role, provided opportunity to test perceptiveness, and set norms of being concerned for process (in communicating, in listening, in making decisions, and the like).
Group B fed back to A its observations.	
Group B observed Group A, and so on.	This provided an early experience both in giving and receiving "feedback" as to how one's behavior appears to others.

Evening Activities:

Groups met separately as T (for Training) Groups.	The groups continued work initiated in the afternoon but with members playing both participant and observer roles.

Friday, October 29

Morning Activities:

Exercise on cooperation.	An ingenious exercise provided a vivid experience in what cooperation demands. (Groups of five work at a puzzle in which no one can complete the task unless all five do and in which there is only one way all five can complete task but several ways in which two to four can complete task). The impact was greater than lectures <u>about</u> cooperation could have been.
Continuation of T Groups.	These provided intensive experiences--a "laboratory"--on group formation.

Afternoon Activities:

Continuation of T Groups.	

Evening Activities:

Exercise on consultation skills.	This provided a real experience in problem definition and in ways of giving and receiving help on real problems. Distinction is drawn between "telling" approach and diagnostic approach and the consequences of each.

Saturday, October 30

Morning Activities:

Participants worked in three subgroups with a staff consultant exploring different areas: leadership, "feedback," and group effectiveness.	This provided relevant theory, required collaboration, and involved groups in an opportunity to design and carry out a learning activity.
Each subgroup had task of planning how to function as a teaching team on its subject with the other groups.	This put T-Group learnings to a realistic test.
Demonstration and discussion of force field analysis as diagnostic tool (not scheduled but emerging out of discussion).	This impromptu discussion provided a brief exposure to a method for diagnosing problems in a more orderly fashion designed to make visible the forces that are driving and restraining -- helping or resisting -- in the problem situation.

Saturday, October 30 (continued)

Evaluation and closing.	The participants and staff evaluated the program and considered possible implications for further training -- explored and examined this.

The T Groups were stressed because the here-and-now behavior of the participants in creating a productive group seemed the best textbook for learning about teamwork.

V. EVALUATION

The overall rating (4.1 on a 5-point scale) suggested general satisfaction. "Building relations with leaders of other community groups" was given by participants as a major motivation for attending, and increased awareness of the importance of openness and trust was seen as the most effectively accomplished objective. The most common complaint was that the time was too short, a fact which may help explain the participants' evaluating the skill exercises on cooperation and on consultation higher than the T Groups. The exercises were complete, self-contained, and sharply focused. The relatively unstructured T Groups were deeply involving and apparently related to the process of trust formation, but more frustrating. Even so, most of the written and spoken comments about the T Groups indicated satisfaction that it had received major emphasis. Some put it this way, "We did not welcome it, but we came to see its value."

The decision to start with groups observing each other rather than with separate T Groups seemed to be a good one in establishing the participant-observer role. It was also perhaps a less threatening way to begin. As it was, the groups seemed to start with a fairly high degree of suspicion and fear about being manipulated. This was apparently resolved to a large extent, as evidenced by the openness with which this was discussed at the end.

The brief introduction to force field analysis was seen as a useful, systematic approach to diagnosing problems before reaching decisions or action. This could have been used profitably to a greater entent throughout the program.

There were expressions of regret that other key persons had not been present and hope that they might be involved in future programs.

At the last session participants were asked to write out their reflections about the value of such training for self and other community leaders and groups. The comments are given below:

> --I think this can be quite effective when skillfully done with a committed and responsible group. The issue of "backhome" utilization needs some additional work, perhaps some follow-up reflective sessions.
>
> --I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on my own development. I thought I had reached a "static state." Wanted help to understand my own feelings and the value of interpersonal relationships and their value in more effective community action. I think the staff was sensitive, nondirective, and well trained. I also gained greater insight into my own feelings and behavior and the behavior of people in the community who are leaders.
>
> --Good only where the person has a strong will to do his job better.
>
> --I wish some sort of organized follow-up could have been arranged.
>
> --Want to explore doing something similar for staff, board, and also to extend to other community leaders.
>
> --For me, provided tools for administrative improvement.
>
> --Would be useful to extend training to others.
>
> --Very important to have more sessions involving the community leaders.
>
> --Found it personally helpful and am anxious to apply. Would feel that it is obvious most community groups have real need in leadership training. Would hope they and staff have opportunity in some manner to participate in such training. Helps to form solid basis for action.
>
> --Value for peer groups is apparent. For nonpeer groups, the process used might raise complications. Other groups should have more preparation so that there would not be the danger that they might feel experimented with or threatened.
>
> --Most impressed by <u>integrity</u> of process. Strongly feel that technique could be extended to community and institutional leadership (say, police and community leaders) with many benefits.

VI. CONCLUSION

The need for improved problem-solving skills in urban communities is urgent. The formation of the new Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the recent special message from President Johnson on "Improving the Nation's Cities," the statistics on urban deterioration, the human waste this means, the day-to-day experience of urban dwellers--all indicate both the need and the potential for action. As the New York Times editorialized on January 27, "The rebuilding of the nation's cities and the strengthening of their social fabric are enormous undertakings. The President's message only points the way on what is sure to be a long road, but he is entirely right that now is the time to begin."

The Washington Leadership Teamwork Development Laboratory looked at an aspect of leadership development in the urban city--one that is so much with us that we ignore it as an area for training--the process of human interaction. The small face-to-face group is still the decision-making work unit even in the largest city. It is also probably our greatest source of energy but one that is generally inefficiently used. If Washington and other cities are to rebuild and become self-renewing, the small wheels-within-wheels that determine the direction and speed of movement must be understood and made more efficient. The Teamwork Laboratory was a small beginning. It remains to be seen whether it can be further tested.

Real evaluation of the program will have to come with further exploration of implications for continuing training. There did seem to be considerable feeling both among participants and the staff that training of this kind was not only helpful and important but should be extended. A large number of the participants expressed willingness to try to influence others to participate in future training activities. It appears that awareness has been created among a small group of community

leaders of laboratory training and its potential for building better teamwork. Laboratory training for cummunity leaders has been "legitimized" to a degree yet to be tested as an approach that might be extended in Washington. This seems to add up to justification of the risk taken in launching an experiment of this nature in what is admittedly one of the most complex and challenging urban situations in the country. At Airlie House there was indicated a readiness to take further steps. The participants represent a key group for exploring what these steps might be.

Some of the alternatives that might be considered include:

a. Another 2-3 day teamwork development laboratory for similar participants to extend further the nucleus group in the District who are informed and experienced in laboratory training and thus able to make decisions about its extension;

b. A second (alumni) experience for the first group -- to carry further the learning process and to strengthen the interpersonal relations initiated at Airlie House;

c. A small team from Washington to participate in the NTL two-week Community Leadership Laboratory in Bethel, Maine, July 3-15, 1966, to demonstrate more fully the potential of laboratory training;

d. Development of a problem-solving task force on training related to the Demonstration Cities Project to prepare the leadership structure of Washington, D. C., for the "long pull" of community change.

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